



## European journal of American studies Reviews 2018-1

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### Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/12482>

ISSN: 1991-9336

### Publisher

European Association for American Studies

### Electronic reference

Wayne E. Arnold, « Robert T. Tally Jr., ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space* », *European journal of American studies* [Online], Reviews 2018-1, Online since 18 May 2018, connection on 01 May 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/12482>

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# Robert T. Tally Jr., ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space*

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- 1 Robert T. Tally Jr., ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space*
- 2 London: Routledge, 2017. Pp. 375. ISBN: 978-1-138-81635-0
- 3 Wayne E. Arnold
- 4 The Routledge Handbook series is a sprawling repertoire of academic labors spanning multifarious fields. Each edition is dense, detailed, and devoted to one very specific theme. As editor of the literature and space handbook, Robert Tally's addition certainly meets the standards of excellence one would expect from a Routledge publication. Indeed, spanning 32 chapters, with an introduction by Tally, this handbook has contributions from several established scholars in the realms of geography, comparative studies, and spatial theory. Dedicated to the late Edward Soja—author of the significant *Thirdspace* (1996) and a social theorist regularly cited in these articles—this handbook addresses literature and space from a variety of angles. Divided into five sections, each part contains at least six well-documented articles divided into the following areas: Spatial theory and practice; Critical methodologies; Work sites; Cities and the geography of urban experience; Maps, territories, readings. While it is hard to imagine that these handbooks are meant to be read from cover-to-cover, when doing so the reader is presented with both a historicized understanding of the impact of the spatial turn as well as the wide breadth into which space, place, and mapping has expanded.
- 5 The advent of the spatial turn has been considered by many to be a critical moment in which the academic studies of literature and the humanities broke free from a domineering presence of overworked and outdated approaches. As one critic in the collection roughly defines it, “[t]he so-called spatial turn dislodged a putative nineteenth-century dominance of time in the humanities (whether historical, social scientific or literary) to reintroduce, from the mid-twentieth century onwards, the apparently elided element of space and geography” (West-Pavlov 291). And from that point, the field has blossomed into several diversified branches, many of which are touched upon in this handbook. By separating the articles into five compartments, Tally thereby provides

some cohesion to approaching this now expansive field. In the rest of this review, I briefly summarize the five sections, noting what I see as important contributions to the discussion of space in literature, while also indicating areas that certain authors have highlighted for future exploration. Each chapter is mentioned briefly, separated from the previous chapter by a semicolon.

- 6 Spatial theory and practice; Perhaps the most important section of the handbook, these chapters cover much of the literary spatial theory that has developed since the late 1960s, yet each chapter moves beyond mere summation. Touching on and resituating the theories of Henri Lefebvre, Walter Benjamin, Martin Heidegger, and Edward Soja, among others, these articles cover niche areas that have evolved, or not sufficiently evolved, over the last forty years. Various insights and themes in each article include: stepping outside of the text by looking at “the text as event” (20); the interplay between literary texts and social spaces, and conversely how social space molds literary forms (34); looking at our senses of places, wherein our five senses, as well as the spirituality of places, impact how we apprehend place (47); a close reading of Gilles Deleuze’s *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie*, to demonstrate a link between philosophy and space (58); discussing the phenomenological place representations to argue that creating place is a technique (64); demonstrating how the spatial turn allows us clearer comprehension of where things take place and, therefore, help us “in understanding why and how things happen” (74). There is excellent material in this first section encouraging starting places for future research. For instance, Marc Brosseau offers an overview of new perspectives in literary geography, touching on several branches of spatial studies, but he is keen to point out more than a few areas that warrant expansion. Continuing his argument from his previous research, he suggests that we need to put more thought into the function of space in short stories, crime fiction, and autobiography—where the location of the author means everything (18).
- 7 Critical methodologies; In this section, the true diversity of spatial studies begins to emerge. Ranging from Google Maps, to sound and rhythm, to land surveying, the impact of the spatial turn, often in combination with technological advancements, has opened new avenues of critical thought. One thing that becomes clear in this section is that the field of geography has benefited as much as literary studies with the advancements of the spatial turn. The authors write on several varying facets: Google Maps has allowed us to geovisualize information which has brought forth over 150 internet-based literary maps and databases detailing numerous regions around the world (89); considering what our bodies “do” while we are reading (99); examining sound and rhythm in a text to examine the “aurality of literary space-time” (112); demonstrating Elizabeth Bishop’s relationship to place in her poetry, or what may be “the (partial) failure to engage with place” (119); the importance of scale in literature, and scale jumping, as “literary texts explore and traverse a range of spatial scales much smaller and larger than the nation-state” (127); using digital literary cartography projects to remap and reimagine British Romanticism (135); how field surveys throughout history provide various images of landscapes and terrains and have brought about a genre of survey literature written by non-surveyors (154). These articles taken together send the reader a very clear message: the limitations to where the study of literature, geography, and space that can be combined and applied are few indeed.
- 8 Work sites; Part III is the most intriguing collection of essays in the book. There is a categorical cohesion that allows the chapters to flow together smoothly, as well as

provide ideas for future research. Of noteworthy mention are two chapters dealing with islands and their spatialities. The section deals with the following themes: in “Atopia / non-place,” Siobhan Carroll engages with the work of Marc Augé, detailing how we have, by traversing the extents of the earth, removed the possibilities of finding an earthly utopia and now must explore atopias and non-places (160); Amanda Dennis examines heterotopias, or the possibility of “exploration and experimentation,” as exemplified in the works of Foucault, Beckett, and Calvino (171); there is a need to pay close attention in a text to the longing of places elsewhere, that these other places are triggered, and these projected other places impact the plot (182); following Edward Said’s “imaginative geography,” as well as regionality and narrativity, we should consider to a greater extent how imagination impacts the boundaries of our reading (192); for certain texts, in particular Shakespearean period plays, the neighborhoods in which they were written, of which they depict, and then where they were performed, can provide valuable insight into “localized spatial and social relations” (202); islands, as “perfect sites of encounter,” can be analyzed through three significant characteristics: “possession, separation, and transformation” (210); considering the difficulties of defining an island, the literary accounts of mapping islands bring into question whether islands are bounded or interconnected within—or without—the world around them (220). Across these essays, the authors ground their arguments in theory, textual analysis, and facts of world history and geography, providing for interesting and fresh readings.

- 9 Cities and the geography of urban experience; the essays in this part are focused around analysis of geographic attributes in specific cities, including London, New York, Johannesburg, and Toronto. Of worthy mention is Jean-François Duclos’s look at literature that features the art of following, or shadowing, a character. Many of these articles also contain examples from specific novels and short stories to support the arguments. The cities and geography of the urban experience involve a multitude of elements, the following of which are explored in this part: the characterization of a “city-novel” is not clearly defined, but certain characteristics should be examined, including reference to the real city, spatial distances between places, language and accents, and various contexts of time (234); a look at Daniel Defoe’s *Molly Flanders* and *Robinson Crusoe*, with the curious question of: could city-dwelling Moll survive in island-dwelling Robinson’s position? (243); using texts set in Johannesburg to map the contested realms of cultural spaces and the gritty underworlds of corporate enslavement and criminality (252); a look at two novels that are set around Toronto’s ravine systems, which wind through the city, and provide a backdrop for examining spaces of difference (263); a nostalgic look at Greenwich Village, specifically, West 10<sup>th</sup> Street, and the inability to revive and make tangible, or even designate as historic, the rich literary past of this street (276); the final chapter focuses on the individual, within the urban environment, demonstrating how the follower (shadower) is different from the flâneur, in that the follower “uses the crowd in order to singularize the existence of one person” (282). Of the various cities in these articles, we perceive numerous approaches to literature and space that can be generated by the uniquely diverse environment of each city.
- 10 Maps, territories, readings; This final part is the least cohesive of the book, combining what seems to be six articles that do not fit elsewhere in the prior parts. Taken individually, they have valid arguments and confer the following themes: using two texts by writers of African descent, Russel West-Pavlov argues that we have advanced the spatial turn to the state of a “spacetime successor-paradigm,” which is a move from the

spatial to the affective (291-92); the environmental determinism of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century should be reconsidered in terms of its historical significance, with special consideration given to the work of Ellen Churchill Semple (304); by looking to the 1500s and the works of Spanish explorers to the “Indies,” we discover a verbal mapping, where readers who had no access to world maps were able to visualize the regions and images as recorded, many times from memory, by the Spanish travelers (315); James Joyce’s *Ulysses* receives a fresh look at its chronotopographic design (or, “sites made up of several strata of events”) through Joyce’s interpretations of *The Odyssey* (334); new spatial perspectives on the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party can be reoriented through reexamining publications by Latin Americans who visited the country in the 1950s (339); looking at Natalie Barney’s writing, Amy D. Wells argues that “Barney executes literary activism, creating and claiming a place for female-oriented sexuality” (355). While the section heading encompasses these six articles, their lack of a more overarching and consistent theme leaves this section only for readers seeking one specific article topic.

- 11 Tally’s editing of this Routledge Handbook is well handled, and the different parts provide readers with solid arguments and important new perspectives on understanding how significant the spatial turn has been for literature and the humanities. Along with established humanities scholars, there are several geography scholars who have contributed valuable insight with their research. Accompanying these thirty-two articles is a healthy index, spanning fourteen pages. This index is a welcome tool, as not all the Routledge Handbooks include such detailed indexes. Overall, Tally’s addition to the Routledge Handbook series will be a worthwhile addition to your private library and certainly a necessary addition for the university library, as students interested in learning about the spatial turn, space, and literature will benefit from access to this timely addition to the expanding field of literature and space.